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EXPERIMENTS ON THE SWEET SPRINGS. 199

the acidity of the water might not be owing to it; and also to determine the nature of the air, whether fixed or not. Having therefore caught a quantity of the air in a decanter, I communicated a part of it to an equal bulk of pure mountain water, and after agitating them for some time, gave it to several to taste; who agreed that it had the taste of the spring water. Upon a second trial this experiment did not succeed. I had not an opportunity of trying the nature of the air by means of chalk-water, and was prevented from prosecuting any farther enquiries into the nature of these celebrated waters by a sudden alarm, to which the frontiers were then continually exposed.

These waters have been falsely called *sweet*, for their taste is evidently acidulous. The experiments also shew that they contain an acid. Their taste resembles exactly that of waters artificially impregnated with fixed air, extricated from chalk, by means of the vitriolic acid, and I conceive must be nearly the same with the true Pyrmont water. They have little or no smell, do not form an incrustation, nor do they leave a deposit upon standing many hours. Upon bathing in the morning, the skin has a soapy kind of feel. This was not observed in the evening.

There is near this spring another, a very strong chalybeate.

I am, with great regard, yours,
J. MADISON.

N° XXIII.

A Letter from the Rev. JEREMY BELKNAP, on the preserving of Parsnips by drying.

Dover, New-Hampshire, March 5, 1784.

Read Apr. 26, 1784. SIR,
AMONG the number of esculent roots, the
parsnip has two singular good qualities.
Cc 2 One

One is that it will endure the severest frost and may be taken out of the ground in the spring, as fresh and sweet as in autumn; the other is that it may be preserved by drying to any desired length of time.

The first of these advantages has been known for many years past; the people in the most northerly parts of New-England where winter reigns with great severity, and the ground is often frozen to the depth of two or three feet for four months, leave their parsnips in the ground till it thaws in the spring, and think them much better preserved than in cellars.

The other advantage never occurred to me till this winter, when one of my neighbours put into my hands a substance which had the appearance of a piece of buck's horn. This was part of a parsnip which had been drawn out of the ground last April and had lain neglected in a dry closet for ten months. It was so hard as to require considerable strength to force a knife through it cross-wise; but being soaked in warm water, for about an hour, became tender, and was as sweet to the taste as if it had been fresh drawn from the ground.

As many useful discoveries owe their origin to accident, this may suggest a method of preserving so pleasant and wholesome a vegetable for the use of seamen in long voyages, to prevent the scurvy and other disorders incident to a sea-faring life, which is often rendered tedious and distressing for want of vegetable food; since I am persuaded that parsnips dried to such a degree, as above related, and packed in tight casks, may be transported round the globe, without any loss of their flavour or diminution of their nutritive quality.

I am sir, your humble servant,
JEREMY BELKNAP.